

Communicate research using professional methods.

by Michael Jennings, using ideas taken from the famous book,
Confessions of an Advertising Man by David Ogilvy

Communicating well is part of being a scientist.

Your work can't benefit others if they don't know about it.

Many of the people who could use your work or who make decisions about supporting your work are not as technically knowledgeable about your field as you. They need your help to understand.

Communicating your work requires a long-term creative effort, similar to an advertising campaign. Here's how professional communicators do it:

Select a basic idea.

Make a strong promise to the reader. Samples:

1) "Our microbiology research helped us understand a disease with an obscure name." (typical weak presentation)

2) "We have corrected fundamental errors in previous cancer research."

3) "We have new understanding of the chemical pathways of leukemia." (idea taken from the Ogilvy book, page 93, item 1)

Find a great presentation.

Perhaps: "We will show step-by-step the mistakes made in previous research, and how our methods will change drug design." (page 95, item 2)

Give the facts.

People love to have facts handed to them. It's marvelous to hear the work that was done and what was discovered without having to do the work oneself. (page 95, item 3)

Be sure you have plenty to say.

Don't ask for attention unless you have something worth the audience's time. The reader or viewer or listener must feel after experiencing your communication that the effort was worthwhile. (page 97, item 4)

Be respectful.

The reader doesn't have your knowledge, but he or she has a human brain, and therefore has the potential to make valuable discoveries also. (page 97, item 5)

Relate your work to the reader's interest.

Show how your work is relevant to what's happening now. Perhaps: "We can use our work to design a new cancer drug." (page 98, item 6)

Your message must be your own.

Your campaign to communicate your work must reflect your personal approach, and only that personal approach.

If your message reflected other peoples' manner also, it would be fragmented and confusing to the reader. For that reason you're alone when designing your communication.

Once you've chosen a direction, other people may be able to give you helpful criticism. But, more likely they may not be able. It's best not to expect that anyone else will help you creatively, or even fully understand your effort to communicate. However, every writer needs an editor. (page 98, item 7)

Stay with what works.

If you design good communication, use it until it is no longer helpful. (page 98, item 8)

Be honest.

You shouldn't be embarrassed to show your communication to your co-workers or anyone in your field. If there's a part of your effort about which you don't feel completely satisfied, it needs more work. (page 99, item 9)

Create a coherent understanding.

Each element of each communication must contribute toward an overall whole. If there is an element which doesn't contribute, delete it.

The impression you create should be one with which you will be happy for years, or until you grow into something else, or for the rest of your life.

Be yourself. Don't try to be something you're not. Don't present yourself in a way that you can't sustain. (page 99, item 10)

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